



## Project Document Cover Sheet

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## **STUDENT LIFECYCLE RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

# **DERBI – Development and Enhancement Review of Business Interfaces**

## **FINAL REPORT**

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April 2010

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## Acknowledgements

This project was conducted with support from the JISC Student Lifecycle Relationship Management (SLRM) funding stream, which is part of the Business and Community Engagement (BCE) programme. We wish to acknowledge the support of academic and administrative colleagues at Derby who provided of their time to help build the process map and identify service improvements. We are very grateful to the guidance and direction given by Myles Danson, the Programme Manager, and the help and support given with patience by the staff at CETIS, especially Sharon Perry. Last but certainly not least, we must thank the students, without whom none of this would have been possible, or even necessary.

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## Background

The University of Derby is a large, complex organisation with approx 25,000 students. In keeping with the ethos of this post-1992 HEI, Derby has a diverse student body and programmes are offered in a variety of modes of study e.g. full-time, part-time, distance and blended learning. The project sought to improve the quality of the student experience from pre-entry to readiness to engage in learning and teaching.

Derby operates an integrated student record, finance and customer relations management system which links to the VLE, IT and Library access, halls of residence, etc. Integration offers many benefits, not least single data input for multiple purposes, but also presents challenges as processes are highly inter-linked and multi-dependant. Enrolment is perhaps the most complex and multi-dependant process operated, yet one which is critical to get right if we are to deliver a quality student experience, add value and continue to build relationships through the interactions with students. Derby offers students online enrolment off-campus and, supplemented by support, using IT facilities on-campus in dedicated suites.

The University uses a variety of communication methods to build and maintain relationship with students, including one-to-one and group face-to-face sessions, letters, text, email (individual and auto-generated), social networking, Wimba classroom, web-pages, online services and portals, and direct telephone calls. These apply across the range of the student lifecycle considered in the project. The University's student record system, Peoplesoft, implemented in 2005, includes functionality which has been exploited during implementation, for example the development of online enrolment, and other functions, such as 3Cs (communications, checklists and comments) which could add considerable value to student relationship management.

Whilst efforts were focused on a review of the experience of the transition from applicant to enrolment for all students, in drawing up the service blueprint, a particular cohort of full-time undergraduate students was identified (see Case Study). Findings which related to other modes of study and types of student, eg post-graduate, professional and international, were taken into account in the outcomes but were not core to this project.

## Aims and Objectives

The original aims and objectives of the project remain largely unchanged:

1. Use service improvement strategies (service design) to map the student lifecycle from pre-entry to readiness for learning and teaching and scrutinise these with stakeholders.
2. Develop a blueprint of the enrolment process from the students' point of view considering main stages of the process, timing, participants, and tangible and intangible aspects of the student experience.
3. Explore the dependencies required to make enrolment effective in an integrated system. Identifying and exploring interface points during the three stages of the student lifecycle.
4. Develop and implement a service improvement plan.
5. Pilot service and system enhancements and measure impact in terms of improved

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student satisfaction and strengthened relationship management.

6. Review and learn from experience, develop a case study to disseminate findings.
7. Continue service enhancement through further action planning and application of service design techniques in other areas of the business.

*Note: Implementation will take place outside the life of the project and full evaluation of the interventions will not be complete until after the September enrolment period.*

## **Methodology**

*'Technology is just ideas. Design is about taking those ideas and making them work for people'*

*David Kester,  
Chief Executive of the Design Council.*

Interoperability: by its very nature, enrolment touches on many aspects of University business processes: Finance (fees and invoicing), Quality (validation and programme audit and review), Registry (the Student Finance Company, student records etc), and Faculties (academic and administrative support). Consultation in all of these key areas was a requirement in order to build up a fully realised and comprehensive service blueprint and over 100 members of staff and students took part in various focus groups and/or workshops (see Appendix B, the Consultation Log).

Engagement with the project by staff and students was critical to success, it was gratifying that there was a positive response from staff in faculties to take part in the project and the Students' Union gave strong support. Without this level of inclusivity, the service blueprint could not have been mapped out to the level of detail achieved.

## **Implementation**

A core project team of Sue Morrison, Russell Roberts, Jean Mutton and Polina Baranova (Consultant in Service Design, and a member of academic staff at Derby) was established as soon as the funding was approved, and met in July 2009 to scope and plan the initial activities, which included setting up a project management group, chaired by RR, comprised of staff from relevant departments and the faculties. The group met on eight occasions over the life of the project - the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix C. The governance of the project and especially the involvement of key stakeholders from the beginning set the tone for broader staff engagement in future activities as well as providing a valuable resource for the core project team. There is always a challenge to engage academic staff in change projects generated from central departments, and having representatives from each faculty was a deliberate move to both represent their faculty views but also act as a channel of communication into the academic body. This aspect of the project governance required consistent work and although best efforts were made on the part of the project team, there was not always a good turnout at academic staff focus groups. On reflection, the project team should have made contact directly with key faculty managers, to raise awareness of the project, rather than relying committee members who could not always attend, although invariably proved enthusiastic when they did.

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*"I am fully behind what (the project) is trying to achieve and believe that the work it is undertaking is a credit to both the committee and the university as a whole."*

*Tony Loynes  
Quality Manager, University of Derby, Buxton and PMC member*

The Student Union nominated their VP Academic Affairs, who attended the first meeting and expressed enthusiasm for the aims of the project but then did not attend again, despite reminders. There was a suggestion that one of the Union Managers could attend instead, but the group felt it was more appropriate to secure the direct student voice.

Staff awareness of the project across the institution was raised by articles in the staff magazine 'Connected', and presentations to academic staff at faculty conferences etc. The project team also worked with colleagues in Student Support and Information Services to ensure that every opportunity was exploited to explain to staff what the project was trying to achieve and to encourage involvement. A key factor in providing a locus for interested parties to find out more about the project and its aims, was the publication of the project webpages, and the Project Manager's blog, launched in August 2009, which were deliberately situated in the student experience section of the staff website. Twitter followed in October 2009 ('myderbi'), with modest success - perhaps it is still too new a medium for full engagement to staff unused to accessing IT for social and other networking platforms. Despite the Project Manager's best efforts, not even all of the Management Committee were signed up by the end of the project.

One of the first actions was to appoint a Derby student, Rachel Crane, on her placement year out from her degree in Business Psychology, who was shared with another area, the Programme Advisory Service, and who brought a direct voice to the project of the student perspective and the student experience.

The next steps involved employing PB as the project consultant, who was asked to deliver a session on the theory of service design and techniques for blueprinting, to which key staff were personally invited. These staff then worked with JM to map out the roles which they and their departments had in the student transition process. In the end three such workshops were held, between September and November 2009, to ensure that all relevant aspects of the service were captured. Staff not necessarily directly involved with the project were also invited and took back to their own workplaces the methods they learned in reviewing service design. Some staff were keen to do follow-on work, and two further sessions were provided by PB on service improvement techniques.

Although there was not much time to prepare for detailed research to be undertaken during September enrolment, we were able to arrange for timecards to ascertain how long it took students to go through certain steps in the process to complete their enrolment. We also recruited eight student mystery shoppers, three with video cameras, to record their experiences of enrolment. This was a rich source of information and the capturing of the live student voice proved to be very powerful in relaying messages about the need for service improvement to managers and other staff. During late enrolment week, we ran on-the-spot questionnaires of the students standing in queues, asking why students had missed their main enrolment session.

In early December we held an interim internal review, where four members of the project management committee were given access to all the paperwork and other artefacts arising from the project to that date, including all evidence, and governance material. The only area where the project was falling behind was in the timing of the focus groups, which was

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rectified during January and the consensus was that the project was delivering beyond what was originally intended. The report from the interim review is at Appendix D. The project had initially contacted a fellow professional from another institution to act as a critical friend to the project but in the end the offer of support had to be withdrawn, due to personal circumstances.

In late December 2009, at a request from JISC, Derby hosted a one-day session where PB presented two lectures, one on service design and one on service improvement techniques, and project staff outlined how Derby had approached the project. Artefacts from the day were made available to public access via the CETIS website and also the DERBI project website. Feedback from virtual and actual attendees was very positive, although one useful piece of advice was to make the presentations available prior to the event, rather than after. As a follow-up, CETIS ran a satisfaction survey and 10 of the 11 respondents agreed with the statement that the session had met their expectations. Open comments included:

*It was really useful to have real world examples that we can all recognise and relate to – waiting rooms, restaurant staff examples etc – and too see examples of blueprints/models.*

*The practical session was great. Sitting down and working out with other people your understanding of how service design works will benefit our project massively.*

There was a general consensus from the other SLRM projects that it would have been helpful to have held this workshop earlier, but from our point of view we could not have delivered it any sooner as our blueprint was still in development in the weeks just prior. In January, we were pleased to welcome project staff from Kingston College who paid a visit to talk about how Derby had approached the project and what we had learned from our involvement and what advice we could give.

An unforeseen bonus has been that, in supporting this training event, the audio-visual team at the university extended their knowledge and expertise of broadcasting live presentations across the web, assisted by staff at CETIS and using JISC technologies. The staff magazine Connected reported on this event in its February 2010 edition:  
<http://www.derby.ac.uk/connected/stories/broadcast-beats-the-snow>

The majority of the staff and student focus groups were held during December and January, and although turnout was not always as good as hoped (see Case Study), there was some useful feedback gleaned (Appendix E gives the schedule of focus groups). It was particularly interesting to hear from academic staff how they would like to be more involved with the design of the service and to understand more fully what the key steps were in the processes behind enrolment.

At January enrolment we were able to trial two key interventions: the use of a 'passport to enrolment' card which contained a tick list of the steps in the process and some FAQs; and, with a view to improving the servicescape for queues, the showing of DVDs with the VC's welcome address and information about the university and its support services. The 'passport' had been developed from an original idea in use by the faculty at the Buxton site and one unforeseen outcome was that the academics staff at Derby responded very favourably to the cards as they were able to then understand better the student experience and hence provide the necessary advice and guidance. Work is in hand to further develop this idea for the September enrolment period. Some very useful feedback has been received from a recent student focus group which reviewed the draft materials, and made recommendations for improvements, such as putting a photograph on the front page of the guide of the student ambassadors, who we employ to help out during the enrolment period, wearing their distinctive orange T-shirts, so that they will be more easily recognisable.

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Interest in the application of service design and enhancement techniques grew exponentially at Derby as the project developed. The sharing of the blueprint both with individuals and at key committees has been particularly provocative. The blueprint has been widely recognised as a valuable tool to plot out a highly complex student experience and business process and combine this with a clear focus for enhancement effort through identifying fail and wait points. Consideration was being given from February onwards to identifying other stages in the student lifecycle to apply the technique and to drill down deeper into business processes which impact on the student experience, such as programme validation. At a recent session with stage from across the institution, it was agreed that blueprinting techniques should be applied to map out the processes for validation and a working group has been established to take this work forward, to which the project team will be contributing. As it came to the final few weeks, the project made a presentation to the Student Experience Strategy Group, and they have asked the project manager to undertake further work to map out the experiences of a range of other types of student, such as International. A workshop has been planned for a Corporate Management Team meeting in June in order to explore capture enhancement plans, organisational learning and options for future application more thoroughly.

Much of the time in February, March and April was taken up with working closely with staff to plan interventions for September enrolment activities as well as report preparation for JISC. Additionally, preparations and execution of the majority of the dissemination events, held both in-house and across the sector as detailed in Appendix F took place in March and April and there were times when the resources to the project were stretched thinly across the three key activities of continuing the work generated by the project, writing reports for the funding body and dissemination across the sector of the outcomes.

To date, SM and JM have made three of the planned presentations at sector conferences about the project, focussing not only on the planned interventions but also the application of service design in HE. Response has been very positive: we have had requests for further information and have invited back to the Academic Registrar's Council (ARC) in the Autumn to talk further about our implementation of the service design approach and impact of the interventions on the student experience of enrolment. We await formal feedback from the sessions at Association of University Administrators (March) and the Student Records Officers' Conference (April), but the latter event had over 70 attendees, none of whom had used blueprinting as a technique to capture current service to facilitate change process. There has been much written about the application of service design in the public sector but little directly relevant to HE: it would seem that there is now an appetite across the sector for the application of these techniques. There was a general consensus that delegates were interested to follow up further work on service design generally, and blueprinting in particular.

*"This is just a quick note to say thank you for your really informative presentation last week. I think it really stuck a chord with most of us who are continually looking to improve processes, that often the student perspective is overlooked. Using the blue print as a tool was interesting especially focussing on the major pinch and fail points. I noticed lots of people have a good look at the example you circulated (the blueprint) and I feel that a number will have gone back to their institution with a view of using it as a tool in their next business process reviews. It is always good to have presentation from within the body, thank you for your time and effort."*

Sue Grant  
Academic Registrar  
University of Hertfordshire

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*(ARC Business Sec)*

The presentation written for these sector events is available at Appendix L.

We have recently been asked to take part in a session on using service design approaches in change management, to be held at the JISC Innovation Forum (July 2010) as well as hosting a poster session. Also, the GoSlurp project, working with the 1994Group, have approached the project team to take part in a breakfast Round Table event, hosted by the Guardian newspaper, with the theme of the student transition experience, to take place in June.

## Outputs

Deliverables for the project have been made available to the community and include:

1. Project plan, including quality, evaluation and dissemination plans
2. Service improvement plan.
3. Business process map for the stages in the student lifecycle from pre-registration to learning & teaching;
4. Blueprint of the enrolment process from a student perspective (identified fail points, areas of excessive wait and interactions which are significant in the student experience of enrolment) which has been posted onto the JISC InfoNet website;
5. Case study to disseminate findings;
6. Project website and reflective blog available at <http://www.derby.ac.uk/experience/JISC-enrolment-project> ;
7. Framework exploring approaches to engaging students as partners in service enhancement. (As requested, this will be re-written to be more generic and less Derby-specific.)
8. Guidance made available to other HEIs undertaking comparable reviews
9. Reports for JISC as required.

We have been asked to produce a rich media video podcast of our experiences on the project - this is in hand, and will be made available via the project web-site.

## Outcomes

1. Evidence of the impact on the student experience of enrolment (which is not fully quantifiable at this point)
2. An understanding of what it is that is important to the students in terms of adding value (fundamental to the nature of service design)
3. Greater awareness and understanding of service design techniques and how they can be applied to the student lifecycle;
4. Increased engagement of students as co-producers of their experience at Derby.
5. Enhancement of the student experience at the University of Derby;
6. Shared awareness of findings across the sector, via reports, conference presentations (see Appendix F);
7. Continue service enhancement through further action planning and application of service design techniques in other areas of the business.

Additional benefits identified as the project progressed can be summarised as: staff are enthused by engagement with the project; a closer working relationship between the centre and the faculties has been fostered, and there is a wider understanding of the complexity of

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the processes across the institution, especially by the various process owners. One particular outcome has been the greater appreciation among technical experts of the benefits of service design mapping as a business improvement tool, and the importance of the role of the end-user as a co-producer of the service design.

## Implications

The scope for application of service design and enhancement techniques in HE is extensive. At a stage when students are being encouraged to adopt more consumerist approaches and universities are striving to increase student satisfaction within challenging resource constraints the technique offers much scope for focused enhancement. Application of blueprinting to the transition between applicant and commencement of learning and teaching, and progression, explores the potential of blueprinting to define complex, interoperable business processes whilst maintaining a strong focus on the student experience. Derby has made considerable strides to enhance the student experience, with added focus, since the introduction of the student experience strategy in 2006. This project has given a real insight into how far along the road we are to truly placing the student at the heart of what we do.

Interoperability of systems and services offers efficiency, effectiveness and institutional agility if the relationships established between functions are fully understood. Through the project it has become apparent that further work needs to be done to overcome silos impacting on the design and delivery of an experience which makes sense from a student perspective. There is further scope for functional and technical areas to work in greater partnership, with a shared understanding of goals and focus on students.

There is much academic debate in the sector about the status of students as consumers, participants, co-producers of their academic experience. This project offered an opportunity to explore this relationship for the design and enhancement of services. The student voice on campus has been growing in recent years with increasing numbers of student representatives at programme level, strong partnership between the Students' Union and University executive, increased survey response rates and high profile 'you said it, we did it' campaigns communicating action taken in response to student feedback. As detailed above, the project enabled Derby to extend this activity and use more innovative techniques to gather feedback. A placement student was engaged as a member of the project team, students were invited to be mystery shoppers and completed reflective journals of their early experiences, students completed video diaries, whilst others completed time-cards recording wait times and contributed to workshops and focus groups. Engagement of this type is clearly not a feature all students would expect and in planning activities a proportional take up needs to be considered. However, it is clear that students are generally committed to contributing to improvements, even if they are doing so for the benefit of future students, rather than themselves. Furthermore student feedback is generally very constructive and the demands made of the service are, on the whole, reasonable and considered. The establishment of minimum service standards as a consequence of the project substantiates this: clear constructive dialogue is essential to establishing which components of the experience should be outstanding and which should meet a standard expectation. Queuing being a pertinent example; students expect to queue for enrolment and we have focussed on making that experience more productive and even enjoyable, thus aiming to eliminate queues would not be necessary and effort is best made elsewhere. The process for identifying fail points is excellent for concentrating effort where it makes the biggest impact on the student experience and as a management tool for prompting service enhancements and articulating a case for business benefit.

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The complexity of processes, such as enrolment, is a challenge to effective communication. The service enhancement plan, which represents the culmination of the project, has a significant focus on communication. Many benefits are achieved from a single encounter: registered student status, library access, generic system access for the portal and creation of email accounts, to bespoke data such as module specific materials on blackboard, Students' Union membership, collection of bio demographic and HESA data, registration for modules, payment of fees, trigger for release of student loans, etc. It is apparent from the project that students wish to understand more about the process and that we should be putting more effort into sharing the outcomes, purpose and benefits of enrolment. This focus on communication extends to other stakeholders, including academic staff. The simplicity of the blueprint presentation assists in developing the understanding necessary for collaborative working of functional and technical experts.

Relationship management can be enhanced with students through open dialogue. The quote from Scandinavian Airlines that every encounter with a customer should be treated as a 'moment of truth', a never to be repeated opportunity to make a connection, build a reputation and relationship, has been a powerful focus for the project. The reflections of student mystery shoppers are effective at revealing the moments which have, and have not, added to the relationship. The contrast between focused communication with applicants and new students is in contrast to that experienced by some continuing students. The method of communication is also important. Use of SMS and podcasts are a focus for continued development. The balance of print and web materials requires a review: the drive for efficiency and respond to student demand for extended web services fails to recognise the quality and connection which can be achieved through focused print and the opportunity to share a tangible item with friends and family in preparation for starting or returning to university.

Learning service enhancement techniques and understanding how they are applied to other sectors has been a significant step in the project. Poka Yokes was a previously unknown term, but is a technique which builds failure-proofing into the service. Another approach is to shift responsibility for delivery of all or part of a service to a customer with clarification of the various responsibilities which combine to make a service work for the customer. Most will be familiar with application in the NHS, for example, 'for this test to work effectively you must not eat for 12 hours'. For the university, this translates into requests to bring certain documentation or reminders about the availability public transport (minimising demand for the car park).

One particular aspect of the student experience which was reported on negatively during the campus-based points of enrolment was the service environment or Servicescape. This area is often overlooked but makes a big impact on the overall experience. There were comments about the long queues, but the research tells us that they expect to have some waiting and as long as the queues are not excessive they will not be a problem. There are two locations for main enrolment at the Kedleston Road site in Derby; one is the library, a modern, bright and airy building where those waiting can clearly see what their next steps will be. The other is a narrow corridor (B2) with no natural light and poor ventilation, where students are shepherded from one classroom to another to go through the necessary steps without any idea of when the process will end. It is unsurprising that those waiting on B2 expressed the most dissatisfaction. Staff also find working in that environment stressful. Other locations have been sought but the operation is constrained by the availability and location of the necessary number of PCs and the required amount of space. To date, no viable alternatives have been found. Interventions planned to improve this experience include better flow through in the rooms, more seating, higher staff visibility, plasma screens

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to display relevant information and better on-the-spot advice and guidance and communication of waiting times.

## References

The project website is at  
[www.derby.ac.uk/experience/JISC-enrolment-project](http://www.derby.ac.uk/experience/JISC-enrolment-project)

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Saffer, D. (2010) *Designing for Interaction – Creating Innovative Applications and Devices* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), New Riders, Pearson Education

## Appendices

- A Blueprint of the student transition
- B Consultation Log
- C Project Management Committee Terms of Reference
- D Interim Evaluation
- E Focus Groups
- F Dissemination Plan
- G Theoretical Underpinning
- H Service Enhancement Plan
- I Framework for the Engagement of Students in Service Design and Enhancement
- J Glossary
- K Fishbone diagram drawn up to review password issue
- L PowerPoint for workshops at conferences for sector events: ARC, AUA and SROC
- M Budget